Name: Danita Pappas Age/Grade Level: HS 9-12

Subject Area: Music Unit Title: The Rhythms of Africa

Lesson Title: African Songs Estimated Time: 80 min

**Purpose/Rationale for lesson:**

This lesson will build on aspects of African drumming traditions covered in the previous lesson: master drummer, layered rhythms, and syncopation. It will further explore more complicated rhythms and how they influence what the listener hears. Through performance, observation and analysis the students will learn what African music sounds like and the purpose that rhythm serves in the music. There are myriad musical traditions in the world and African drumming is one of the most popular and most accessible. Students will receive personal instruction from community members and interact with each other.

**Curriculum Framing Questions:**

Essential Question: How is rhythm used in different musical cultures?

Unit Question that applies to this lesson: How is rhythm used in African music?

How do rhythms from different musical cultures influence and relate to each other?

Lesson or Content Questions:

What does playing African music sound/feel like?

How is African music played and notated?

How does African culture relate to African music?

How does African music influence other musical cultures?

**Goal:**

**Learning Objective(s):** The student will be able to…

Evaluate and assess professional and student performances to know how African music sounds

Analyze, write and read transcribed African rhythms to learn how it is played and notated

Play & sing different parts of African songs and compositions to experience what African music sounds and feels like

Compare African drumming with other types of drumming they have heard in order to understand how African music influences other musical cultures

Analyze traditional African music and how it relates to African culture

**Curriculum Standard(s):**

Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.   
Reading and notating music.   
Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Evaluating music and music performances

**Materials Needed:**

Instruments – cowbell, shakers, bells, rhythm sticks, claves, maracas, guiro, congas (3 sizes)

Will Schmid’s arrangement of the rhythm part of “Alle, Alle, Alle”

Both notations of “Maane”

Document camera

Sound system w/adapters to play music from students’ iPod or CD

Laptop w/adapters

Projector system w/adapters

Wifi connection

**Background knowledge or skills students need prior to lesson:**

Internalized steady beat, understanding of rhythm breakdown, ability to read notated rhythms,

**Procedures:**

**Hook or Introduction:** (5-10 min)

A local drumming group will perform “Maane” on their traditional instruments. They have invited their friends to come and demonstrate the traditional dance that accompanies this song. They have also volunteered to teach the song and work with the students as they learn. If it turns out that they are unable to come – show a video of the group performing from their online archive.

(15 min)

Invite the drumming group to take 10 minutes for a short explanation of their instruments, how they learned their songs and dances and where they perform.

5 min Q&A with students

HOMEWORK TIME – (15 minutes)

The students were asked to find a traditional African song and be prepared to share it with the class as well as pertinent information we need to understand the song (name of song, where it is from, when it is used, ect.)

* Invite 3 students, one at a time – using the deck of fate – to present their song to the class
* Each student gives their presentation. Allow them to play only 30 seconds of the song or video
* All students will turn in their outline along with the url or name of song and cd (properly notated APA style) at the end of class as they walk out the door
* Teacher show YouTube video of Jay G. Highlight how traditional African rhythms are used in modern Ghanaian hip hop. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGbBajFOXzQ&feature=pyv)

WHAT MAKES A COMPLEX RHYTHM COMPLEX? (2 min lecture)

* The intricacies of each part working in conjunction with the other parts.
* Syncopation and tied rhythms
* Tension between rhythms

EXAMPLE ETHNOMUSICAOLOGIST -- John Miller Chernoff studied African drumming for 10 years and has written 6 books along with various essays and publications.

(website--- http://www.johnchernoff.com/)

John Miller Chernoff has argued that West African music is based on tension between rhythms. A set of moral values underpins a full musical system based on repetition of relatively simple patterns which meet at distant intervals and call and answer schemes. Values also show up in collective utterances such as proverbs or lineages appear either in phrases that translate as drum talk or in the words of songs. People expect musicians to stimulate participation of all present, notably by reacting to people dancing the music. Appreciation of musicians is related to the effectiveness of their upholding community values. (Wikipedia)

“Alle, Alle, Alle” (20 min)

* a *Jamaican* folk song with a drum ensemble part inspired by West African music.

PLAY RECORDING OF SONG (3min)

Invite students to retrieve instruments (namely claves, maracas, guiro, 3 sizes of congas)

* Give students 2 minutes to look at the music
* Invite a volunteer to play the clave part (if played correctly, acknowledge and move on inviting someone to play each part until they have all been heard correctly at least once)
* Once all parts have been played and heard correctly, start layering the parts. The students can look at the music until the part is memorized.
* Add all parts one at a time until everyone is playing (if group is having a hard time keeping a steady, constant rhythm – use the cowbell)
* Start taking away parts until no one is left
* Next – divide the class into 2 groups. One group is the audience while the other group performs. Ask for a volunteer master drummer. Make students aware that they will be giving feedback and sharing observations about how the parts fit together. Ask them to raise their hand any time during the song if they sense tension between the rhythms (there is no wrong answer) remind them to practice appropriate audience etiquette
* Have the 1st group perform
* Ask for observations
* Have 2nd group perform
* Ask for observations

“Maane” (20 min)

Ideally, teacher will turn over the instruction of the song to our guests. If this is not possible – the teacher will proceed with the instruction.

There are 6 parts, so the class will divide into 6 groups. In the interest of saving time, number the students off and that will indicate the part that they will learn. Organize each part/group into a small circle.

* Using document camera – project the 2 notated parts as the students are getting separated and settled.
* Invite students to read the western notation as it is the most familiar.
* As before, invite volunteers to play each part for a demonstration of correct rhythm. For a variation, if needed – Invite students to play 2 at a time and maybe use cowbell for steady tempo
* Give the students 5 min or so to work in their groups on analyzing and interpreting their part
* Call group to order and indicate that the entire class will now perform the song together
* Bring parts in one at a time
* Subtract parts one at a time

**Differentiation/Accommodation**

For the student with ADHD – We have a behavior-management procedure in place as per the resource room. When this student reaches a point that they feel out of control because of too much stimulation, they have the option to self-monitor and go to their quiet place in the music room. We also have a signal worked out with the student when we feel that their behavior is escalating. Their best friend is in the class and has a calming influence – so both students are allowed to work together at all times. They stand or sit by each other, work in the same group and if needed take a break and leave the room for no more than 5 minutes at a time. Paper copies of the sheet music will be available to them as well.

For our TAG student, we will offer them the option of sight-reading music rather than learning by rote. They can try 2 rhythms at the same time and also be a teacher helper and assist the students that are having a harder time grasping the concepts. It is most likely that the volunteers for rhythm demonstrations will come from this student, make sure to give others the opportunity as well.

The student with the IEP has a harder time understanding the mathematical breakdown of beats and rhythm. The teacher will be sure that this student has a spot in the front of the room where they will be able to evaluate the acquisition of rote memory skills. The teacher will be available to the student to go over the homework assignment in one on one instruction. Paper copies of the sheet music will be available to them as well.

**Attention to Literacy: not required for this assignment**

**Closure:**

Invite the visiting group to perform a song as the students leave the room. Any students that don’t have a class after or have a shorter commute would be able to linger

**Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning:**

Ask students to take a couple of minutes with their group members and talk about the things they did today and what they learned. Have one person from each group report out. Probe for how music relates to culture and how rhythms interact with each other to create a different overall sound.

As groups are working together, as students about the parts they are working on. Be sure they understand the notation and rhythms by having them play for you.